

Bahá'í Holy Places (Israel)

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Background: This is a referred back nomination (31 COM, Christchurch, 2007).

A first nomination dossier for Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee was examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007). At the time, ICOMOS recommended to refer the nomination back to the State Party in order to allow it to:

- *Put in place stronger protection, particularly for the buffer zones and settings of the sites which comprise the nominated property.*

The World Heritage Committee adopted the following decision (31 COM 8B.41):

1. *Having examined the documents WHC-07/31.COM/8B and WHC-07/31.COM/INF.8B.1,*

2. *Considers, bearing in mind the nature of the nomination, its eligibility for recognition of its Outstanding Universal Value on the basis of criterion (vi).*

3. *Refers the nomination of Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee, Israel, back to the State Party in order to allow it to:*

a) *Re-consider the scope of the nomination; and*

b) *Put in place stronger protection, particularly for the buffer zones and settings of the sites which comprise the nominated property.*

The State Party re-submitted the nomination in January 2008. Includes in the core zone are the same 26 buildings, monuments and sites as in the first nomination, but with these grouped into seven protective units each surrounded by a common buffer zone. The overall area protected as buffer zone has been slightly increased.

The State Party also submitted details of:

1. Increased protection for the buffer zone;
2. Analysis, in relation to the justification of outstanding universal value, of associations and material evidence linked with events and literary works, how the elements of the site testify to cultural traditions, and how the physical evidence reflect these traditions;
3. Essay on Bahá'í pilgrimage;
4. Opinion of Professor Moshe Sharon, Professor of Bahá'í Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, on the significance of the Bahá'í faith as an independent religion;
5. Memorandum which provides a rationale for not reducing the number of buildings.

Official name as proposed

by the State Party: Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee

Location: Haifa and Northern Districts

Brief description:

The Bahá'í faith originated in 1844 with the declaration of its Prophet-Herald, the Báb, in the city of Shíráz, Iran. The rapid spread of the new creed was met by savage persecution, and the execution of the Báb in 1850. His follower Bahá'u'lláh a Persian nobleman, became the focus for the new faith. After persecution and banishment to various parts of the Ottoman Empire, he arrived in Acre in 1868. Bahá'u'lláh spent the remaining 24 years of his life in Western Galilee compiling the scriptures that are the foundation of the Bahá'í faith and establishing a spiritual and administrative centre for the religion. He became known as the Prophet-Founder. After his death he was succeeded as spiritual leader - first by his son, Abdu'l-Bahá and then his grandson, Shoghi Effendi.

The Bahá'í faith has now spread around the world and has five million followers.

The serial nomination covers 26 buildings, monuments and sites at eleven locations in Acre and Haifa associated with the two founders of the Bahá'í faith, with their successors and with key events in the history of the faith. They include the two most sacred shrines associated with the religion: the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre, to which all Bahá'í believers direct their thoughts while praying, and the Mausoleum of the Báb in Haifa, as well as houses, gardens, a cemetery and a large group of Neo-Classical administration, research and archive buildings. The eleven sites are grouped into seven protective units, each defined by a common buffer zone.

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of *sites*. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2 February 2005), paragraph 47, this is also nominated as a *cultural landscape*.

1. BASIC DATA

Included in the Tentative List: 30 June 2000

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination: None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre: 26 January 2006

Consultations: ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committees on Historic Gardens – Cultural Landscapes, and on Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Technical Evaluation Mission: 22-25 October 2006. As this is a referred nomination, no further mission has been undertaken.

Additional information requested and received from the State Party: None

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report: 11 March 2008

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The serial nomination consists of 26 buildings, monuments and sites at eleven distinct locations in Acre and Haifa, associated with the two founders of the Bahá'í faith, their two successors and key events in the history of the faith. These are grouped into seven protective units.

The roots of the Bahá'í faith can be traced to the Shi'ah branch of Islam in the mid 19th century. It spread rapidly among young Muslim theologians, merchants and the general public in the 1840s and 1850s. At a relatively early stage it also gained significant numbers of adherents among Jewish and Zoroastrian minorities in Iran, and later attracted a smaller number of Levantine Christians. Toward the end of the 19th century, a connection was also made with Protestant Christianity and this link facilitated its acceptance in North America, which became the principal base for its spread to the rest of the world in the 20th century.

Although it was treated initially as an Islamic heresy, the teachings of the Bahá'í religion soon placed it outside the framework of its mother religion. Today, the Bahá'í religion is independent of Islam. It now has a following of about five million people, unrestricted to any particular ethnic, regional or cultural identity.

The serial nomination includes the two shrines, houses and gardens associated with the Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi (son and grandson, and his two successors), the locations where the "Most Holy Book" and the "Tablet of Carmel" were revealed, together with the resting places of the family of Bahá'u'lláh, the rooms where he and his family were incarcerated for two years, the mansion of Mazra'ih, the Ridván Gardens, two places where the Bahá'u'lláh conversed with the British orientalist Edward Granville, the places where 'Abdu'l-Bahá met with the first European and North American pilgrims, the hall where the international governing body was first elected, a cemetery, and a group of large modern Neo-Classical administration, research and archives buildings for the Bahá'í faith.

The additional material supplied by the State Party details an assessment of the design and physical attributes of the nominated properties, in relation to how they reflect and testify to the values, beliefs and practices of the Bahá'í community, including the specific cultural tradition of Bahá'í pilgrimage. The conclusions of this study do, in

the view of the State Party, justify support for the nomination of all the 26 buildings included in the first nomination on the grounds that the group represent a complete narrative of the development of the religion during its most formative period, from the beginning of the Bahá'í religion as a current of Islam, through its detachment from its roots, to its opening to the world and becoming an independent religion.

The Eleven sites, covering 26 buildings, monuments or gardens are described within the seven protective units into which they are grouped. The nominated area extends to 62.58 ha and the buffer zone 254.70 ha.

Carmel North:

- North Slope of Mount Carmel
- Persian Quarter

Carmel West:

- Place of Revelation
- Haifa Bahá'í cemetery

Acre North:

- Bahji: Mansion and Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh

Old Acre:

- House of Abdu'lláh Páshá
- Prison
- House of Abbúd

Acre South:

- Ridván Gardens

Mazra'eh-Azra'el:

- Mansion of Mazra'ih

Naheriya:

- Junayn Garden

These are considered separately:

Carmel North:

- North Slope of Mount Carmel

Shrine of the Báb: The Mausoleum of the Báb in Haifa, where the remains of the Báb were enshrined, after having been brought back from Iran, constitutes the religion's second most sacred shrine. The casket containing the remains of the Báb was initially interred in a simple one-storey stone structure of six rooms, built between 1899 and 1909, its construction overseen by Abdu'l-Bahá. In 1921, Abdu'l-Bahá was also buried in the building in the centre room on the northern façade. The building, high up on the slopes of Mount Carmel, was subsequently added to on the south side. A major enlargement was carried out under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi, between 1948 and 1953, designed by the architect William Sutherland Maxwell. He surrounded the original stone building with a circular colonnade, of

Rose Baveno granite columns topped by marble Corinthian capitals, and surmounted it with a clerestory, drum and gilded dome.

Terraced Gardens: A kilometre-long series of nineteen rising semi-circular terraces, planted with grass and Cyprus trees and with a central stone stairway was created to frame the ceremonial approach to the Shrine of the Báb. Designed by architect Fariborz Sahba, the terraced gardens were constructed between 1990 and 2001. The idea for the gardens came from Abdu'l-Bahá as early as 1910; then began the long process of acquiring the necessary land. An initial stairway to the shrine was constructed by Shoghi Effendi in the 1930s on the basis of plans by Patrick Geddes.

Nearby is the Arc Path and Monument Gardens laid out by Shoghi Effendi, with four marble monuments erected between 1932 and 1939 to mark the resting places of the wife, son and daughter of Bahá'u'lláh and the wife of Abdu'l-Bahá. The Arc Path formed the axis for the development of the administrative buildings.

International Archives Building: This Greek neo-classical building, designed to the proportions of the Parthenon, stands at the western end of the Arc Path. Constructed between 1954 and 1957, its design and construction were supervised by Shoghi Effendi who stipulated that its design should set a pattern for the other buildings to follow. It houses sacred writings, portraits of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, personal objects associated with the central figures of the faith, and historical artefacts from the early years of the Bahá'í.

Seat of the Universal House of Justice: The Seat of the Universal House of Justice is the dominant structure of the administrative complex, reflecting its role as the permanent seat of the supreme governing body of the Bahá'í. Of Greek neo-classical style, it was designed by architect Husayn Amanat and constructed from 1975 to 1983. The five and a half storey building is surrounded by an arcade of 58 marble columns topped with Corinthian capitals and crowned with a white marble cupola rising above the green tile roof. It occupies the dominant position at the apex of the arc-shaped path.

Centre for the Study of the Texts: This centre of scholarly research and library primarily focuses on the sacred writings and subsidiary texts to meet the needs of the Universal House of Justice. The façade features a portico with a circular entablature resting on a colonnade of marble columns with Ionic capitals. In the centre of the colonnade a marble fountain is set in a sunken garden, separated by glass walls from the interior. It was designed by Husayn Amanat.

International Teaching Centre: The Centre was established by the Universal House of Justice in 1973. Its principal function is to coordinate a worldwide network of counsellors, who act as advisers to the elected institutions at the local and national levels. This nine-storey building, designed by Husayn Amanat, is the largest within the administrative complex. It has two curved classical porticos and an arched roof in-filled with glass at both ends.

Pilgrim House: Abdu'l-Bahá authorised one of the believers to erect this modest oriental style stone building in 1909 as a hostel for pilgrims from the Orient. Since 1969 it has been used as a place for believers to prepare themselves for their visit to the Shrine of the Báb.

Tent Land and Garden: This is a small garden surrounded by cypress trees, where Bahá'u'lláh pitched his tent during a visit to Haifa in 1890.

- Persian Quarter

Residence, of Abdu'l-Bahá: Abdu'l-Bahá commissioned this house which was completed in 1908. He lived there from 1913 until his death in 1921. Shoghi Effendi also occupied the house, and it remained the official residence of the head of the community until his death in 1957. His widow remained there until she died in 2000. The funeral of Abdu'l-Bahá, and many other historic gatherings took place in its central hall.

10 and 11 Haparsim Street: One of these houses was used as a pilgrims' hostel from 1919 until 1929, and the other was used as an occasional pilgrims' hostel, around 1908.

Garden: This was the resting place of Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum, Abdu'l-Bahá's widow; a marble monument was erected in 2001.

Old Western Pilgrim House, Haifa: This house was constructed in 1910 for pilgrims and was restored in 1920.

Carmel West:

- Place of Revelation

This is a small open space, where in 1891 Bahá'u'lláh composed the "Tablet of Carmel", the charter of the Bahá'í world administrative centre. It is marked by an obelisk commissioned by Shoghi Effendi but not erected until 1971.

- Haifa Bahá'í cemetery

A change in the orientation of graves in the cemetery reflects a break with Islamic rites and practices; the first burial was in 1911.

Acre North:

- Bahji: Mansion and Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh moved to this mansion in 1879 and stayed there until his death in 1892. A number of his best known works were composed during his twelve year stay. This Ottoman style mansion was erected in 1821 and a second storey was added by 1868. Two of the outbuildings are used as a pilgrim house and a tea house.

In 1892, the remains of Bahá'u'lláh were interred in one room in an outbuilding and the group of small buildings around a small court became a mausoleum. The large gardens surrounding the mansion and tomb were landscaped later by his grandson Shoghi Effendi, to form an approach to the tomb. They are laid out with radiating

crushed red tile paths between lawns decorated with star shaped flower beds, urns on pedestals and clipped bushes. The Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is the point to which all Bahá'í believers direct their thoughts while praying.

Old Acre:

- House of Abdu'lláh Páshá

Abdu'l-Bahá rented the south wing of this complex. It is where his son Shoghi Effendi was born, where the first western pilgrims met with Abdu'l-Bahá in 1898-99, and where the casket of the Báb was kept for ten years before being interred in the Mausoleum in Haifa.

- Prison

Bahá'u'lláh was incarcerated here for two years from 1868-70 after his arrival in Acre in part of the Ottoman Acre Citadel.

- House of Abbúd

Bahá'u'lláh lived here from 1871 to 1877, and in 1873 revealed the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the "Most Holy Book of Laws".

Acre South:

- Ridván Gardens

This is a small Persian style garden, prepared by Abdu'l-Bahá for his father, Bahá'u'lláh in 1875, on what had once been a small island in the Na'mayn River.

Mateh Asher-Mazra:

- Mansion of Mazra'ih

This early 19th century house was used as Bahá'u'lláh's residence from 1877 to 1879, after his nine-year confinement within the walls of Old Acre.

Naheriya:

- Junayn Garden

This 19th century farmhouse was owned by believers who followed Bahá'u'lláh into exile.

Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee values

The values identified in the nominated properties relate to the significance of the buildings and gardens to the followers of the Bahá'í faith.

History and development

As summarised above, the Bahá'í faith originated in 1844 with the declaration of its Prophet-Herald, the Báb, in the city of Shíráz, Iran. The rapid spread of the new creed was met by savage persecution, and the execution of the Báb in 1850. The focal point of the Baha'i faith moved to Western Galilee in 1868 when, after 15 years of

wandering in Iraq, Turkey and Egypt, the Prophet-Founder, Bahá'u'lláh, who had been expelled from Iran in 1853, was banished to Acre, then a remote part of the Turkish Empire, by the Ottoman Sultan, Abdu'l Azíz. Bahá'u'lláh spent the remaining 24 years of his life in Acre compiling the scriptures that are the foundation of the Baha'i faith and establishing a spiritual and administrative centre for the religion.

Bahá'u'lláh and his family were confined for two years in the Ottoman citadel of Acre during which time he maintained contact with believers and wrote some of his best known texts, such as the "Tablet of the Carmel". In 1870 his youngest son died, falling through a skylight in an incident that Bahá'u'lláh likened to Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son.

When he was finally released from the Citadel, Bahá'u'lláh lived for nine years under house arrest in a succession of houses in the Christian and Muslim neighbourhoods of Old Acre. These included the Mansion of Bahá'u'lláh, where he died and his mausoleum is housed, and the House of 'Abdu'lláh Páshá where Abdu'l-Bahá lived until 1911 and where his son Shoghi Effendi was born, and where the remains of the Báb were stored for ten years until moved to the Mausoleum in Haifa.

In 1909 the remains of the Báb, brought from Iran, were buried in a very simple mausoleum in Haifa. This was greatly enlarged in 1953 and adorned with a golden dome. The building is now approached through a kilometre-long garden laid out between 1990 and 2001.

The spiritual and administrative centre established by Bahá'u'lláh has continued to develop until the present day, while the religion has spread first to Western Europe and North America and then to the rest of the world.

The Bahá'í religious community now numbers about five million around the world. It proclaims that the founders of the world's main religions - Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Mahommed and Krishna - have been sent by God to educate humanity.

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Integrity and Authenticity

Integrity

The primary basis for the significance of this property is its link to the Bahá'í faith, and the singularly important position these places hold within that religion worldwide.

The nomination puts forward all the important buildings and gardens in Acre and Haifa associated with those who shaped the Bahá'í faith and their successors, and with key events in the history of the faith.

In terms of completeness of the evidence for the manifestation of the faith in Israel, the nominated sites display integrity. ICOMOS examined the selection of sites put forward by the State Party, and in particular considered whether the information provided by the State

Party provides a comprehensive justification for the inclusion of each of the selected sites, based on their importance in the history and beliefs of the Bahá'í religion.

ICOMOS concluded that the identification of the key sites of importance to the followers of the Bahá'í faith is best made by the followers themselves, and that the documentation provided by the State Party clearly indicates that this is the case for the sites that comprise the nomination.

ICOMOS further concluded that it is not appropriate to suggest reductions to the nominated sites.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property demonstrates integrity linked to the history, belief systems and present day spiritual home of the Bahá'í faith.

Authenticity

The dossier suggests that the nominated property is authentic due to the important historical and continuing spiritual associations with the Bahá'í faith.

The State Party also puts forward the view that because of the very recent construction of some of the selected buildings and gardens, their authenticity and integrity are assured. In support of the claims to authenticity, the nomination dossier also cites letters written by 'Abdul-Bahá about the restoration and maintenance of their holy places, in which he states: "*The house must, however, preserve its original design. Nor should the slightest change or modification be permitted... The aim is not to embellish, but to preserve the precise state and condition prevailing in that blessed abode at the time...*"

The nomination dossier stresses that the process of minimal intervention is practiced on the selected sites and monuments associated with the founders of the Bahá'í faith. The dossier also details how the form of several buildings has been restored to the condition at the time of their association with the founders, such as the prison at Acre where post-1920s alterations have been removed and some features recreated; and the Junayn Garden which has been restored to what it would have looked like at the time of Bahá'u'lláh's visits, involving some demolition and replacement of joinery.

Other buildings have been significantly altered and enlarged since the time of the founders, such as the Shrine of the Báb, at which a major enlargement was carried out under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi between 1948 and 1953, designed by the architect William Sutherland Maxwell.

On other parts of the property there has been progressive enlargement of designed gardens, such those around the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh, laid out by Shoghi Effendi, and the kilometre-long terraces created between 1990 and 2001 to frame the ceremonial approach up to the Shrine of the Báb. Elsewhere there has been construction of administrative buildings on a large scale such as the Seat of the Universal House of Justice 1975-83, the Centre for the Study of the Texts 1999, and the International Teaching Centre, 2000.

The buildings and sites nominated are tangible expressions of the body of doctrine and system of values and beliefs that form the content of the Bahá'í faith. Given the link between authenticity and the faith, and the standards of conservation established by the Bahá'í faith and documented in detail by the State Party in the nomination dossier, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property as a whole demonstrates authenticity.

In particular, ICOMOS considers that the buildings associated with the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and the gardens and buildings remodelled or designed by Shoghi Effendi display a high degree of authenticity as they largely survive as they existed at the time these people were living, although some have been restored.

ICOMOS considers that the more recently constructed buildings and gardens have a more tenuous association with the people who shaped the faith but are undoubtedly authentic in terms of their associations with the doctrines and beliefs of the Bahá'í faith.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property demonstrates integrity linked to the history and spiritual home of the Bahá'í faith and that the selected-buildings and sites demonstrate authenticity as tangible expressions of the body of doctrine and system of values and beliefs that form the Bahá'í faith.

Comparative analysis

The nomination dossier compares the nominated elements of the property with those buildings connected to the founders of the Bahá'í faith in other countries. These include structures in Iran, Iraq and Turkey. It is stated that most of these other sites are not in the hands of Bahá'ís, have not been adequately preserved, and/or are not accessible to visitation by believers from other countries. A notable exception is the house in Edirne, Turkey occupied by Bahá'u'lláh from 1864 to 1868, which has been acquired by the Bahá'í community and meticulously restored.

A number of buildings and sites in Europe and North America associated with the travels of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1911-1913 are owned and preserved by the national Bahá'í communities. Effendi's grave is in London and Bahá'í houses of worship are found in the United States of America, Australia, Germany, Uganda, Panama, India and Samoa, while another is planned for Santiago, Chile.

ICOMOS considers that the primary significance of the property is its link to the Bahá'í faith, and the singularly important position these places hold within that religion worldwide. The nominated property, consisting of a group of 26 buildings and sites, cannot be compared to any other group of buildings within the same faith and is therefore unique.

ICOMOS does not consider that it can assess faiths, nor comment on the importance or otherwise of the Bahá'í faith in relative terms or whether this association is stronger than, or as strong as, other associations between other buildings and other faiths.

ICOMOS considers that there are no relevant comparators for the nominated property.

Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value

The State Party states that the 26 buildings and sites are of Outstanding Universal Value for the way they:

- Represent and reflect the birth, consolidation and spread of an independent monotheistic religion supported by an unprecedented abundance of authentic scripture and other contemporary documentation including accounts, commentaries and even polemics from a variety of sources and contrasting points of view.
- Testify to the existence of a coherent body of doctrine completed by a system of values and beliefs, which forms the distinctive content of the Bahá'í religion.
- Reflect the investment of scarce resources in the preservation and beautification of the properties, and particularly in gardening, as well as the extensive use of colour and light in architectural and landscape designs, which are expressive not only of the love and devotion of Bahá'is for their religion, but also of their optimistic and forward-looking worldview.

The State Party makes the case that the collection of 26 buildings and sites in areas of Acre and Haifa reflect a pivotal period in the development of the faith, and that several sites are unique, such as the tombs of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the three most important figures in the religion; the rooms where Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away; and the locations where the "Most Holy Book", the "Tablet of Carmel" and other major scriptural works were revealed.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of criteria (iii) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.

In the additional material submitted in January 2008, the State Party has provided further justification for this criterion.

The State Party justifies this criterion on the basis that the selected sites "*constitute a unique testimony to the religious beliefs and cultural values of the Founders of the Bahá'í faith, their early disciples and its contemporary worldwide following, in terms of the completeness of the physical representation and its power to communicate the contents of the tradition of the Bahá'í faith. As such they represent a priceless resource for the study of one of the world's monotheistic religions and the physical, historical and cultural context in which it developed*".

The State Party further emphasises the way the design and physical attributes of the nominated properties reflect and testify, in a powerful way, to the cultural values, beliefs and practices of the Bahá'í community, as well as the process by which it evolved and detached itself from its historical roots.

It further suggests that pilgrimage should be considered as a cultural tradition and that all the nominated properties are visited by pilgrims.

ICOMOS recalls that "cultural heritage" for the purpose of the World Heritage Convention is defined in article 1 of the Convention.

ICOMOS considers that the property does constitute a unique testimony, which includes all the important holy places related to the origins and development of the Bahá'í faith in Israel. This is possible because the development of this faith was initially restricted territorially and has developed over a relatively short space of time.

ICOMOS notes that not all spiritually and historically significant buildings and sites associated with any particular faith can be said to be outstanding for those associations alone. For many religious sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, their architectural and material qualities are a deciding factor and many such properties are inscribed according to criteria (i) and/or (iv) as well as (vi). Other religious sites are inscribed for the way they demonstrate and encapsulate in a significant and material way, a cultural tradition, and these are inscribed on the basis of criterion (iii).

In the case of the nominated Bahá'í buildings and sites in Haifa and Acre in Israel, none are nominated for their architectural or material attributes. The original nomination was based on the idea that the various ways a religion or belief system is given outward expression constitutes a "cultural tradition" and thus the buildings as a group reflected the cultural traditions of the Bahá'í faith.

The State Party in its supplementary documentation suggests that within the context of the Bahá'í faith, pilgrimage is a practice that has been observed for well over a century, has acquired a traditional character, and relates to each of the sites included in the serial nomination. The State Party suggests that pilgrimage as part of the practice of the Bahá'í faith is also a cultural tradition and that the physical attributes of the nominated buildings are powerful communicators of this cultural tradition.

The concentration of holy places in this small area makes it the principal focus of pilgrimage for the followers of the Bahá'í faith, who aspire to pray at the Shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, and to visit the other buildings and sites included in this nomination in order to strengthen the bonds that connect them with the founding figures of their religion and to deepen their religious understanding and identity.

ICOMOS considers that the focus of this pilgrimage (as set out in the supplementary material) are the two holy

shrines, the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Shrine of the Báb, rather than all the buildings.

Furthermore ICOMOS considers that although all the nominated buildings are part of the Bahá'í faith, some are sacred while others reflect the way the faith has developed - as suggested by the State Party these latter group provide a narrative of this process. ICOMOS does not consider that the history of the Bahá'í faith can be seen as a cultural tradition, but does consider that the two shrines on their own, as the most holy places of the Bahá'í faith and as the focus of pilgrimage, do reflect the central core of the faith and the influence it has had.

ICOMOS considers that the outstanding universal value of the whole collection of buildings cannot be justified in terms of their intrinsic historical, artistic or scientific merits, nor in terms of the way they collectively represent a cultural tradition. However it does consider that a case could be made for justifying the use of criterion (iii) for the two most holy shrines of the Bahá'í faith in terms of the way these buildings are the focus of a powerful tradition of pilgrimage.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) could be justified for the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh with mansion and gardens, and the Shrine of the Báb and terraced gardens.

Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

The State Party considers that this criterion is justified as the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is the point to which all Bahá'í believers, wherever they reside, turn their faces and direct their thoughts while praying. Thus for Bahá'ís, it holds a position comparable to that of the Temple remains in Jerusalem for Jews, or the Kaaba in Mecca for Muslims. The Mausoleum of the Báb constitutes the faith's second most sacred shrine.

The nominated property is seen by the followers of the Bahá'í faith as tangible expressions of the body of doctrine and system of values and beliefs that form the content of the Bahá'í religion, and the nomination dossier provides a very comprehensive description of each element and its religious meaning.

ICOMOS acknowledges that the collection of buildings is of exceptional value to the followers of the Bahá'í faith because of their associations with the founders, as the fount of their religion, and the influence the faith has had around the world.

The Committee at its 31st Session acknowledged that the property could justify criterion (vi) as a reflection of the way the two holy shrines have a meaning and value for members of the Bahá'í faith all over the world. The focus for this justification is the two holy shrines.

ICOMOS considers that part of the nominated property, that is the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh with mansion and gardens, and the Shrine of the Báb and terraced gardens, satisfy criterion (iii) and (vi) and have outstanding universal value.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

Development pressures

The nomination underlines the fact that the coastal area of northern Israel from Haifa to Nahariya is undergoing a process of urbanisation, generating pressures to build highways, industrial zones, shopping centres and high-rise housing.

Unfavourable developments within the buffer zones could jeopardise the setting of the nominated sites within this property and might impact negatively on its values. Currently these are opposed by patient and insistent negotiations by the representatives of the Bahá'í faith to prevent exemptions from the requirements of legally valid, but obsolete planning schemes, and through the rights of objection provided by the Planning and Building Law.

ICOMOS considers that current practices cannot in the long term guarantee the protection of the settings of the nominated sites (see below).

Environmental Pressures

The nomination dossier acknowledges the concentration of heavy industry in the area between Haifa and Acre, most of it dating from the early to middle decades of the 20th century. This poses serious problems of air pollution which can have a devastating impact on sandstone and marble. No ameliorating measures are suggested to counter the problem, although various reverse osmosis systems are being tried on the stone.

Natural Disasters

The risk of destructive earthquakes is considered relatively high due to the close proximity to a major geological fault line. Buildings are monitored regularly for structural weaknesses and earthquake risk is considered, among other factors, in all restoration plans. Reinforcement of foundations has been undertaken in a few cases, but only when it was indispensable to remedy a clearly established and potentially dangerous weakness in the structure.

Risk Preparedness

Fire and safety regulations are adhered to in all the buildings, and fire alarms have been installed.

ICOMOS considers that the main risks to the property are from urban development and that currently there are not sufficient measures in place to mitigate these effects adequately.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

For most of the sites which comprise the nominated property, the boundaries are defined by ownership. Almost all of them are owned by the Bahá'í World Centre (the exception is the prison in the fortress of Acre,

which is owned by the State of Israel). The great majority of the properties lie in urban areas, and in practical terms, there is little space to enlarge the boundaries.

The boundaries of the nominated sites do not always correspond to the boundaries of the areas protected by town planning schemes. These schemes sometimes take into account the ownership situation, but are sometimes much broader.

In the initial nomination the buffer zones were divided into “A” and “B” zones, the former representing an area where a reasonably satisfactory levels of protection was provided by ownership, contract, or town planning schemes, and the latter denoting territory where unfavourable developments may be expected. In zone B there was little protection, and because of the degree of threat, extra vigilance by the Bahá’í was needed to try and counter adverse development.

In the additional information provided in January 2008, the State Party acknowledged the buffer zone of the site known as the North Slope of Mount Carmel was noticeably more tightly drawn than the others, and that the Haifa sites known as the Persian Quarter and the Bahá’í Cemetery appeared to be unprotected by TAMA 35 (see below).

To address this lack of protection, and in order to obtain the full benefit of the protection provided by TAMA 35, the nominated properties have been grouped into seven “protective units”, aligned on the concept of “complexes for preservation” used to designate areas deemed worthy of protection. These protective units encompass both the core and buffer zone and are seen to create a more efficient tool for managing the nominated properties.

For the sites in Haifa (Carmel north and Carmel west) this protection will be put in place as part of the new outline scheme for Haifa (TAMAM 6) which is in preparation. No final date for this has been provided although confirmation that it will happen has been made by the Director of National Planning and Administration, Municipality of Haifa. The documentation provided also states that this plan will ensure due weight is given to the protection of the buffer zones and the ‘larger settings’ of the Bahá’í sites.

For the Acre sites, no changes have been made to the protection of the buffer zone as it is stated that, the new master plan for Acre recognizes all five Bahá’í sites located within the city boundaries, Bahjí and Ridván Garden being mentioned by name and the other three sites being included in the recognition of Old Acre. It is not clear whether this refers to the core or buffer zones.

ICOMOS considers that the amendments made to the scope of the buffer zones and the additional protection proposed for the Haifa properties will deliver greater and more appropriate protection for the immediate setting of the sites, but that the wider setting will still need protecting through other planning mechanism and the vigilance of the Bahá’í community.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the core zone adequately represent the most important places of the Bahá’í faith worldwide. ICOMOS considers that the re-drawing of the buffer zones around groups of sites and the extra protection proposed for Haifa will deliver more effective protection for the immediate setting of the nominated property.

Ownership

All the properties are owned by the Bahá’í World Centre through one of the not-for-profit associations that serve as holding companies, apart from the Acre prison, which is owned by the State of Israel.

Protection

Legal Protection

Legal protection of the nominated sites is provided by legislation applicable to heritage sites in general, and through regulations protecting their character as holy places: the Antiquities Law (1978), the Palestine Order in Council (1922 and 1924), the Law for the Protection of Holy Places (1967), the International Agreement between the Bahá’í International Community and the Government of Israel (1987), and the Planning and Building Law (1965).

At the national level, the Combined National Scheme for Building, Development and Conservation (“TAMA 35”), designates most of the Bahá’í sites as “*urban complexes for preservation*” and the Mansion of Mazra’ih as a “*rural complex for preservation*”. This designation recognises sites of historic or architectural value where integrity needs be protected. Bahjí, the North Slope of Mount Carmel, Ridván Gardens, the Place of Revelation of the “Tablet of Carmel”, Junayn Garden and the entire Old City of Acre are “*urban complexes for preservation*”. This means that not all the nominated sites are protected as properties of national importance through this legislation.

The supplementary information provided by the State Party in January 2008 sets out how the Haifa properties will come under TAMA 35 once the new regional, the comprehensive district plan (“TAMAM 6”) is finalised. For Acre, the new master plan has recently been approved, and recognizes all five Bahá’í sites located within the city boundaries, Bahjí and Ridván Garden being mentioned by name and the other three sites being included in the recognition of Old Acre.

In Israel, the task of compiling lists of cultural heritage properties is divided between the Israel Antiquities Authority, which has an inventory of all archaeological sites, and the Council for the Preservation of Buildings and Historic Sites, which holds a list of buildings considered to be of national and local significance.

The control exercised by the Antiquities Authority is fairly strict, but it covers only the properties dated to older than the year 1700. Later buildings and sites are protected by particular town planning schemes approved in conformity with the Planning and Building Law. The primary tool for the protection of heritage sites available

to interested parties is to propose schemes and to object to those proposed by others. Because all of the Bahá'í properties date from the period following 1700, their protection is based on the provisions of the Planning and Building Law, although because some are linked to older structures or sites, they are sometimes subject to the Antiquities Law.

The main threats to the properties come from outside the nominated areas, within part of the buffer zones and beyond. In some cases, the existing town-planning schemes are out of date, and others are prone to "spot schemes" which allow for waivers to enable specific developments that can in some cases be detrimental to the values of nearby sites. The usual way to oppose such unfavourable developments is to make demands to the local planning authorities to issue policy statements not to grant exemptions from the requirements of legally valid, but obsolete, schemes, which could have adverse effects on the Bahá'í properties. The Bahá'í World Centre asks to be involved in consultations on the planning or re-planning of the areas with obsolete schemes or without any schemes. Finally, the resistance to unfavourable developments can be exerted through the rights of objection provided by the Planning and Building Law.

The proposed extension of the scope of TAMA 35 to include all nominated sites and their buffer zones is to be welcomed as greatly strengthening the core and immediate settings of the property. The wider setting will still need to be protected from development that could impact in its integrity through rigorous enforcement of the tools that exist.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection of the nominated areas and their buffer zones will be improved once the TAMA 35 provisions come into force for Haifa. ICOMOS considers that the wider settings of the nominated areas remain vulnerable. ICOMOS acknowledges that, in practical terms, this is mitigated to a large extent by the proactive approach of the Bahá'í International Community in monitoring development around their sites.

Conservation

Inventories, recording, research

The history of interventions in the buildings is detailed above.

Present State of Conservation

The present state of conservation of the nominated areas is good.

Active Conservation Measures

The basic conservation principles were set out by the founders of the Bahá'í faith and these dictate that historic structures should be preserved through minimising the loss to the original building fabric; that regular maintenance is the most effective and economical form of conservation over the long term; that repair is always preferred over restoration; that materials used for repair

should be compatible with the existing; and any restoration work should be reversible.

The overall approach to the conservation of the Bahá'í Holy Places generally gives priority to maintenance over restoration. In a few instances major structural strengthening has been undertaken, using modern materials and techniques. Presently large portions of load-bearing walls of the 1957 International Archives Building, originally constructed using blocks of light concrete, are being replaced with reinforced concrete to provide for extra seismic resistance.

ICOMOS considers that conservation approaches are appropriate.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

All the nominated sites, except for the Acre Prison located in the northwest tower of the citadel in the Old City of Acre, are owned by the Bahá'í World Centre and managed by the Universal House of Justice, the central authority of the worldwide Bahá'í community. It is a collegial body of nine members who reside in Haifa on a full-time basis during their five-year term of office.

The staff of the Bahá'í World Centre number approximately 700 Bahá'í volunteers and about 200 local employees, divided into Departments of Holy Places, Works, Gardens, Facility, Cleaning and Maintenance, Security, and the Office of Public Information. The permanent staff includes one architect trained in building conservation, three other architects and engineers, an objects conservator, 40 craftsmen, 150 gardeners and 134 guards and caretakers. Additional professional skills are provided through the extensive use of expert consultants from Israel and other countries, as well as through the expertise of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The fundamental management philosophy derives from the sacred writings of the Bahá'í faith, which emphasise the historical and religious importance of the properties for future generations. Management of the properties is seen as a long-term process, and priority is given to maintenance and good housekeeping. A Management Plan has been prepared which sets out the management, maintenance and conservation approaches. The overall management is well structured, and its success will further be secured by regular monitoring and reporting, through condition assessments (so far performed for four properties), conservation surveys (prepared for one major structure) and maintenance manuals (presently being drawn up).

Equally high standards apply to visitor management. The Holy Places attract large numbers of visitors (550,000 to 860,000 visitors per year in Bahjí, the Shrine of the Báb and the terraced gardens only). The two main attractions are open to the public without entrance fee. However, all the Bahá'í properties are primarily open to the pilgrims (an organised nine-day program), to other Bahá'í visitors from overseas and to the staff of the Bahá'í World Centre.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

Qualified professionals occupy the key staff positions, and the volunteers and local workers are supervised by experienced senior members who give them on-the-job training, so the know-how is passed from one generation to the next.

The maintenance and operating costs, and the capital expenditures are funded by voluntary donations from the worldwide Bahá'í community. The funds allocated are sufficient for high quality work. As an indication, during the twelve-month period from May 2002 to April 2003, approximately \$ 4.5 million (US) was spent on the maintenance of buildings and grounds, security and crowd management, restoration works and property insurance.

ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property provides high quality management.

6. MONITORING

A suite of indicators has been used for monitoring since 2005. These include structures with stability concerns, the number of visitors and the price of water for irrigation. Further conservation assessments of properties are needed as a baseline for further more detailed monitoring exercises.

ICOMOS recommends that further condition assessments are carried out as a baseline for future monitoring.

7. CONCLUSIONS

ICOMOS considers that not all buildings associated with a particular religion with a worldwide following can be said to be outstanding for that reason alone.

ICOMOS considers that the buildings of the nominated property do not demonstrate outstanding universal value from an historical, artistic or scientific point of view.

However, in the light of the new material put forward by the State Party on the significance of the pilgrimage traditions associated with the Bahá'í faith, ICOMOS considers that the *primary significance* of the property is the value the two Holy shrines of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre and the Báb in Haifa for believers all round the world and for those who visit as part of the Bahá'í pilgrimages that have now become a major cultural tradition.

Accordingly ICOMOS considers that the Holy shrine of Bahá'u'lláh with its mansion and gardens, and the Holy shrine of the Báb and its terraced gardens can be considered to have outstanding universal value.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Holy shrine of Bahá'u'lláh with its mansion and gardens, and the Holy shrine of the Báb and its terraced gardens as part of the Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee, Israel, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria (iii) and (vi)*.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Bahá'í Holy Places demonstrates outstanding universal value for:

The Holy shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy shrine of the Báb, as the most holy places of the Bahá'í faith:

- Provide an exceptional testimony to the strong traditions of Bahá'í pilgrimage which have grown up over the last century and draw large numbers of followers from around the world.
- Have a profound meaning and value for followers of the Bahá'í faith as sacred sites linked to the faith's two founders.

Criterion (iii): The Holy shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy shrine of the Báb, as the most holy places of the Bahá'í faith, and visited by thousands of pilgrims each year from around the world, provide an exceptional testimony to, and are powerful communicators of, the strong cultural tradition of Bahá'í pilgrimage.

Criterion (vi): The two holy Bahá'í shrines have a meaning and value for members of the Bahá'í faith all over the world.

The property demonstrates integrity linked to the history and spiritual home of the Bahá'í faith and it demonstrates authenticity as tangible expression of the body of doctrine and system of values and beliefs that form the Bahá'í faith.

The legal protection of the nominated areas and their buffer zones will be improved once the TAMA 35 provisions come into force for Haifa. Conservation approaches are appropriate and the management system for the property provides high quality management.

ICOMOS further recommends that the name of the property be change to: "Bahá'í Holy Places".

In order to reinforce the protection of the properties, ICOMOS further recommends that measures should be put in place to mitigate adequately the effects of urban development.